

The Right Hon. Lord Macclesfield
1608/5252
From the Author

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

VISITATION,

HOLDEN AT

BOROUGHBRIDGE, IN YORKSHIRE,

On TUESDAY, JUNE 26th, 1798.

By the Rev. SAMUEL CLAPHAM, M. A.

Vicar of Great-Ouseborne.

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The approbation with which the following Discourse was honored in the delivery, together with the request of the Ordinary and Clergy that it might be published, induced the author to print a few copies for private inspection.

What is inclosed between [] was omitted in preaching, for the sake of shortening the discourse.



A SERMON, &c.

1 Cor. III. 8th & 9th Verses.

EVERY MAN SHALL RECEIVE HIS OWN REWARD ACCORD-
ING TO HIS OWN LABOR.

FOR WE ARE LABOURERS TOGETHER WITH GOD.

WHOEVER voluntarily undertakes an office in society, imposes upon himself an obligation to discharge with fidelity the duties of it. If he execute his trust, of whatever nature, with integrity, he is consoled for his trouble, and rewarded for his labor, by the consciousness of neither incurring guilt, nor disappointing expectation: if he be remiss in his engagements, and inattentive to his commission, so far from deriving satisfaction, and experiencing comfort; whilst he forbears to reflect on his conduct, because it is a source of uneasiness, he dreads the investigation of it, from the apprehension, that, instead of receiving approbation, and meriting reward, he is liable to all the severity of censure, and the harshness of reproach.

In order to ensure uprightness in the discharge of the various offices of life, the Author of nature wisely implanted this moral principle in the human mind. Be our station in life what it may, however mean, or however exalted, we are all equally liable to its suggestions: would God, we were uniformly obedient to them! But there are certain stations which, though they are, in common with every other, amenable to this

jurisdiction, yet may be considered in an especial manner, as answerable to an higher Court, and a more awful Judicature; that profession, my Reverend Brethren, in particular, to which we belong. As "we are workers together with " God," we know that the approbation we shall receive from him, in whose name, and for whose sake, we devote ourselves " to the furtherance of the Gospel," will, if we have been diligent in our calling, and exemplary in our conduct, be recompensed with the most substantial blessings " at the resurrection of the just. For every " one of us shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." The motive from which we entered into the service of our divine Master; the fervour of our prayers, and the energy of our exertions, to promote his glory, and exalt his name, will, in that Court from which there is no appeal, direct the decisions of the impartial Judge, and determine our everlasting destiny.

The work of the Christian Ministry is the most important which can be committed unto man.—Where the vigilance and the zeal of the Pastor are duely exercised, and judiciously directed, we see a progressive increase of good morals, and of vital religion: where the work of the Lord is negligently performed, we perceive a rapid decline of both public and private virtue, and the very form of religion withdrawing perceptibly from observation. So essential is the unremitting care, and unceasing attention of the Minister of the Gospel, to all the people individually committed to his charge,

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The present state of the kingdom is so awful, and of our Church in particular, so alarming, as to awaken in every considerate mind, the most serious and melancholy reflections. The State has been, and is at this moment, threatened with a total revolution. Dissenters of every description, forgetting their disagreement in theological opinions with us, and with each other, have united with many of our own people, who either entirely absent themselves from public worship, or are only occasional attendants upon it, to subvert the Church, to dissolve the Monarchy, and to annihilate the Constitution. His Majesty's Ministers have secretly watched, and publicly exposed their malevolent intentions. They have hitherto warded off the blow, but the hand is still lifted up to strike. A loud and a general call has been made upon us to exert ourselves with peculiar energy; for from our ministerial labors, accompanied by the blessings of Providence, are the preservation of the Church, and the protection of the Empire, chiefly expected. In many excellent publications, composed for the purpose of distribution among the inferior ranks of society, the authors of which deserve the highest praise, the Clergy are considered as the instruments to be employed in the hands of Providence, of bringing back our people to loyalty of principle, and uprightness of conduct. "The rich man," says one of these useful writers, "may subscribe his wealth, and the mighty man put forth his valour, but it is upon the exertions of the Clergy that the salvation of this country must chiefly depend." (*)

(*) See the Pamphlet entitled, "Sound an Alarm."

Impressed deeply, as I acknowledge myself to be, with the same conviction, I shall not, I trust, be considered wanting in deference and respect to this venerable assembly—obscure as is my situation, and mean my abilities—by suggesting to you such reflections as common observation supplies; and you, I am willing to persuade myself, the subject being so personally interesting to all of us—will regard the motive only by which I am impelled—“our own salvation, and the salvation of all that hear us.”

That the Clergy of the Church of England constitute a most respectable body of men, whether they are beheld in the light of useful Instructors, or considered in the character of private citizens, may surely be affirmed without the imputation of predilection and partiality. “From the restoration to the present time,” says our late amiable Diocesan, “Ecclesiastics have always made a distinguished figure in the whole circle of sciences and arts; their writings have ever ranked amongst the purest of the times; and let the occasion excuse me, if I add, (the proofs of what I say are before the world) that our profession is at this very day, adorned by men, who in genius, in learning, judgment, taste, and elegance of composition, have few, if any superiors.” Take the whole numerous society in one collective view, and it may with the greatest truth be affirmed, that you will no where find either in ancient or modern times, a body of more than ten thousand persons, situated in the midst of a populous, rich, commercial, luxurious kingdom, surrounded with every temptation, and every danger

“ danger to which virtue can be exposed, whose
 “ morals are so blameless, and so little injured
 “ by the general contagion, as those of the Eng-
 “ lish Clergy. To them the poor, the sick, the
 “ distressed part of their flock naturally look up,
 “ as their chief refuge and support; and in
 “ some small villages, (if you except parochial
 “ relief) the Minister of the Parish is almost the
 “ only resource they have.” (*)

Now if this be a just representation of the Ecclesiastical character in general; how, it may be asked, can the present call upon the Clergy by all ranks and descriptions of men, to discharge their duty with greater zeal, and more abundant application, be reconciled with this impartial description of them? That the Ministers of the Church of England are many of them such, is evident to the most superficial observation. But let me not give offence when I say, that the great defect in our character is an apparent want of zeal to promote the advancement of Religion, and the Salvation of mankind. If, my Reverend Brethren, you are disposed to doubt the truth of the observation, let us look into our several Churches: let us see whether our Congregations are, in general, composed of more than one half of our Parishoners: let us see whether our constant communicants are even one third part of that congregation. And then what account can be given of all who neglect our worship, and despise our instructions? Let us farther examine the state of our parishes. Is not the Lord's-Day most astonishingly prophaned? Has not the

(*) See Sermon 7th Vol. 2d. of Bishop Porteus's Sermons.

Sunday-Evening the appearance of a day set apart for the purposes of riot and mirth, rather than of rest and devotion? Let us take a still nearer view of the several families—and there, what deplorable ignorance shall we discover? The parents living in the utter neglect of all Christian duties; and their children neither taught to love God, nor to know him. The pathetic lamentation which the Almighty made of his chosen race, is not, I fear, inapplicable to many Christian parishes—“ My people are lost sheep, they go
 “ astray, they turn away on the mountains, they
 “ go from mountain to hill, they forget their
 “ resting place.” Now, since many men live without even the profession of Religion, how can we expect that they should cultivate the virtues essential to their welfare in this life, and indispensable to their salvation in the next? Whoever has such an expectation will be grievously disappointed. Living without any fear of God, and without any influence of Religion upon their minds, depraved in principle, and of consequence declining in morals, they naturally become dissatisfied with their situation; they are an easy prey to designing and artful men; they are readily taught to expect that a change of Government, both ecclesiastical and civil, will be productive of mighty advantages *to them*; and are therefore eagerly disposed to join in any attempt to overturn that Church from which they have neglected to derive directions for their conduct, and consolation to their hearts; and to destroy that Government whose protection they renounce, and whose authority they contemn. (*)

(*) See a very excellent publication, throughout, entitled
 “ A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis,” sold by Dilly.

The whole kingdom, dreading the consequences of such licentiousness, turns its eyes upon us, imploring us "to give ourselves wholly "to the work of the Ministry" we have undertaken, that, by the influence of our example, the cogency of our arguments, and the importunity of our exhortations, our people may, by the blessing of God, be actuated by a sense of duty, may be taught to fear God, and disposed to worship Him; that they may be persuaded to bring up their children in his service, so that a principle of religion may be implanted in every heart. To such a call, God forbid that our conduct should give cause for surmise, that we are inattentive or indifferent! Whilst the teachers of many other persuasions are either openly inculcating, or artfully suggesting the inutility of the Establishment, together with the advantages of a change of Government, may we be all gloriously distinguished by elucidating with diligence, and enforcing with power, the doctrines and the precepts of the Gospel! and then may we rationally hope, and confidently expect, that the people committed to our charge, "will live "peaceably in all godly quietness, honoring the "King," reverencing their Superiors, and abhorring all intercourse "with them that are "given to change."

The circumstances of a neighboring kingdom, and more particularly of its Clergy, here present themselves to our view. How miserable their condition! many of them have fallen a prey to the most savage cruelty; some to preserve their lives, have meanly renounced their religion, and impiously "denied the Lord that bought them;"

and others have long been, and are, at this moment, supported by the bounty of Christians, whose faith they esteem heresy, whilst in their hearts they admire, and with their mouths they proclaim its moral influence, because they are themselves the objects of its distinguished benevolence. As however they have not those tender ties, and fond attachments, which, to the Protestant Clergy, are so wisely permitted; they have only to lament, independently of the suspension of the exercise of their Religion, the loss of their revenues, their absence from their friends, and their exile from their country. Methinks I see them in their wretched habitations, falling prostrate on their knees, before the image of their Saviour, the only treasure, for such they devoutly esteem it, they were enabled to convey in safety, imploring Him to feel the same compassion for their country in general, and for their several parishes in particular, as He did for the multitudes when he saw them on the mountains of Judea, "wandering and dispersed, as sheep having no shepherd." The Sunday returns, but instead of presenting itself to them, as it had done in the season of their prosperity, as "the Day which the Lord hath made," for the celebration of his worship, and the glory of his name, it excites in them emotions, which we, I pray God! may never experience, the melancholy reflection, that "they are no longer allowed to be put in trust with the Gospel, and to be labourers together with God."

Now, if the Supreme Governor of the universe, my Reverend Brethren, "spared not" the Clergy of a neighboring kingdom, "let us take care,
" lest

“ lest He also spare not us.” Let their sufferings “ be ensamples to us, that we walk not,” as it is said, very “ many of them walked,” in the neglect of their duty, and in forgetfulness of God. I have been told by some of those unfortunate men, that had there not been among the sacred Order, a general relaxation in the discharge of their professional obligations, Philosophy would have hesitated to propose, and Credulity have refused to embrace those principles, the influence of which has occasioned such universal misery, and deluged their land with blood. What evils await this Church and Nation is known to him alone, “ who doth according to “ his will, in the army of heaven, and among “ the inhabitants of the earth, in the sea, and in all deep places.” But if, by following the directions of the Apostle, “ by preaching the “ Word, by being instant in season, and out of “ season,” our labors will have so happy an influence, and so blessed an effect, as to avert those dangers, which, “ rising at the first, like a little “ cloud, no bigger than a man’s hand,” are now become so gloomy and threatening, as to excite alarm in every breast ; powerful and additional obligations are laid upon us to inculcate order, to promote contentment, in a word, to re-establish all the graces of the Gospel. Should our domestic, conspiring with our foreign foes, ultimately accomplish their diabolical purposes, what—let the recent events of the sister kingdom answer the question for me,—what have not the Clergy of the Church of England to expect ? The loyalty which now exists, receives no mean support from our examples, our conversation, and our writings ;

ings; would not then the usurpers justly fear, that, actuated by love to our Sovereign, and attachment to our Country, we shall not be wanting to rekindle the expiring flame? So that we, you perceive, have every thing to dread; more surely than any other description of men. With the obligation of duty, let us combine a motive of interest to stimulate us, if need be, to "seek the peace of the kingdom, and to pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall we have peace."

I will not wound your feelings by presenting to you the melancholy spectacle of our Churches being turned "into houses of merchandise;" or what we should consider a still greater profanation, into assemblies for the purpose of establishing democracy, or of disseminating enthusiasm. No! God of his mercy avert such evils from this Church and Nation! I will not afflict your souls by displaying before your eyes, the wretched, wretched state to which the Country would be universally reduced, were the preaching in its genuine purity, of that holy Religion which we profess, to be suspended. No! Be not so wroth with us, O Lord; let not thine anger be thus manifested against us!

To prevent such dreadful calamities depends, we are told, altogether upon ourselves. If we dedicate our time, and exert our talents, to promote a national reformation; if "we cry mightily unto the Lord," beseeching him to strengthen our zeal, and assist our endeavors, the speedy and visible change which will be produced, will give vigor to our exertions, and strength to our perseverance. And no season so auspicious to a
national

national reformation, and individual amendment, could be chosen as the present. The Rich and the Great, alarmed with the inundation of immorality, by which the Kingdom is overflowed, and dreading the effect of the principles, which have been propagated with such malicious industry, and adopted with such indiscriminating ardour, now proclaim their conviction, that Religion alone implanted in the heart, in order to suggest the principles, and direct the actions of men, can attach security to property, and stability to government. It was a very general complaint among the Clergy, that the example of a family of distinction, in their several parishes, together with the profligacy of their domestics, had the most pernicious and extensive influence upon the morals of their unthinking parishioners. But the scene, blessed be God ! is now changing. The Great, alarmed with apprehension for the loss of their property, unite with every other rank of people in suggesting to us the necessity of detaching ourselves altogether from secular pursuits, and of keeping solely in our view, the nature, and end of our professional obligations. By what means a reformation of manners is to be produced, is a consideration of high importance. I will therefore presume upon the continuance of your attention, and the exercise of your candour, whilst, in an unassuming tone, and in a respectful manner, I lay before you, as briefly as I can, what appears to every thinking man to be indispensable towards securing the existence of the Church, and disseminating the blessings of the Gospel.

The first thing which is, I believe, generally considered essential to the promoting this great end,

end, is personal intercourse with our several parish-
 oners. This excellent custom, is, I fear, so
 much laid aside among the Clergy, that it is
 scarce regarded as constituting a part of our mi-
 nisterial vocation. But unless it be revived, and
 made the foundation on which the structure of
 Religion and morals is to be built, all our labors
 will, in a great measure, be ineffectual. The ex-
 perience of half a century establishes the truth of
 the assertion, and gives it the force of demon-
 stration. To know personally every one who
 lived in their several parishes, and to visit occa-
 sionally, and also at stated periods, every family
 committed to their charge, formerly constituted
 a part of the employment of the Clergy. By
 these means the Pastor knew, and was known to,
 all his flock. He had an opportunity of becom-
 ing acquainted with their several wants. And
 when he observed that any of his people neglect-
 ed the Church, or absented themselves from the
 Sacrament, he affectionately communicated his
 observations, which were both respectfully re-
 ceived, and efficaciously regarded. Now, without
 such personal exhortations, how are the multi-
 tudes who deprive themselves of the blessings
 resulting from a regular attendance on the Courts
 of the Lord's House, to be brought to love his
 holy habitation? How are the ignorant to be
 shewn the sin of neglecting the Church, and dis-
 suaded from their thoughtless adherence to such
 pernicious custom, but by private admonitions;
 —by obviating, with the most conciliating mild-
 ness, and christian patience, all their objections;
 by applying to their reason; by appealing to their
 fears; by expressing for them the utmost con-
 cern,

cern, and assuring them, that the importunity we shew, proceeds from the express command of God, who hath enjoined us to use it; and who, if we fail to do it, "will require their blood at our hands?" If it be the duty of Christians in general "to exhort one another daily," surely it is indispensable on the Ministers of the Gospel, to adopt this most efficacious of expedients, "of winning souls: warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." And it would be our invariable practice, could we say with the Apostle, "because I have you in my heart, for God is my record; how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." We may, I acknowledge, sometimes meet with men, who are so obstinate as to reject our counsels, and so insatuated, as to turn a deaf ear to our entreaties—but such instances are rare: seldom does it happen that they, either by their hatred or incivility, "thus requite our good will:" if we have the resolution to persevere, we silence their objections, and overcome their reluctance. Generally indeed they express the highest sense of obligation, and induce us to repeat our visits, and renew our conversation, by the appearance of many of them in the house of God. When we have once prevailed with them to attend the Church, the chief obstacle to our success is removed, and we are encouraged "to go on our way rejoicing;" as travellers journeying through a mountainous country, feel a solace to their toils, and a compensation for their labor, by the several scenes, which, presenting themselves in quick succession,

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at once enrapture the fancy, and delight the eye. For "no sooner does the day begin to dawn, and the day-star to arise in their hearts," than they perceive that Religion was promulged for their benefit and salvation; that it alleviates the troubles of life, and lessens the dread of death. Our personal visits now afford them the highest satisfaction: they hear our exhortations to the Sacrament with attention; they propose their doubts with simplicity; they are convinced by our arguments, and persuaded by our entreaties.* — Our Churches, when the Communion is celebrated, often exhibit a most melancholy appearance. The Congregation, it might be supposed, from the few who stay behind, do not consider themselves invited to the holy Ordinance. If, however, we were, sometime previous to the administration of it, to go regularly "from house to house," requesting the attendance of all our parishoners at Church; and if, when they were assembled, we were to read in an affecting manner, the animated exhortation which our

* What Clergyman can read the admirable Sermon of the Lord Bishop of Chester, addressed to his Clergy, entitled **PARDON AND SANCTIFICATION PROVED TO BE PRIVILEGES ANNEXED TO THE DUE USE OF THE LORDS' SUPPER**, without feeling interested in persuading every person in his parish, and every hearer in his congregation, to celebrate the Lord's Supper frequently and worthily? May I be permitted to add, that it were much to be wished, where the Sacrament is administered only at three or four seasons in the year, that it should invariably be administered on two successive Sundays or Festivals, in order that every person in every family, not only the master and mistress, but every part of the household, whether son or daughter, inmate, man-servant, or maid-servant, arrived at maturity might have an opportunity of receiving it?

Church

Church directs, and were to explain from the pulpit, the nature of the institution, together with the many blessings accruing from the worthy receiving of it; were we, I say, not once only, but always, before the solemnization of that sacred Rite, to address our flock both publicly and privately, every hearer would, I doubt not, become a Communicant.*

When we have succeeded thus far—when we have prevailed with our people to attend public worship, and participate in the Lord's Supper—it is easy to impress upon them the necessity of distinguishing the Lord's Day by a religious veneration. Upon this subject we cannot be too importunate. We cannot insist too often, or too earnestly, both in our private conversation, and public discourses, on the necessity of dedicating that day to the Lord. We cannot shew too much solicitude in every family where there are children and young people, to induce the parents to engrave upon the hearts of their offspring, the duty of keeping that Day holy. For surely we ought to prevent, as far as in our power lies, the extreme profanation of it, which is now become so very general. And if we devote a part of our leisure to the private instruction, and moral edification, more especially of the lower classes of our parishoners, they will be instinctively led to co-operate with us in our

* On leur parle, (says the excellent Bishop of Nîmes) d'un Dieu inconnu, & ils se coulent; on leur preche sa bonté, & ils l'aiment; sa vérité, & ils la croient; sa puissance, & ils la craignent; ses promesses, & ils y espèrent; sa loi, & ils la pratiquent.

See Sermon Pour le jour des Rois.

laudable, but indispensable endeavors, to suppress the unhallowed noise, and irreverent outcries, which, generally after evening service, so shamefully interrupt the repose of that sacred Day.

[To prevail with our people to attend the Church; to receive the Sacrament, to educate their children in the cultivation of good morals, and the principles of genuine Christianity, will afford us indescribable consolation: but to the practice of these duties, if we are solicitous that it should proceed from a right source, we must entreat, and also endeavor to prevail with them to add another—I mean the constant celebration of family worship.

Such abundant, and such extensive good results from the regular and devout observance of this religious duty, that the greatest expressions of solicitude for the welfare in this life, and the salvation in the next, of the people committed to our charge, will be best evinced, by our laboring without intermission, to establish it in every family in our parish; endeavoring, as it is expressed by St. Peter, that “they may be able after our decease, to have these things always in remembrance.” Difficult in some cases it may be to introduce it into many families; but it is by no means impracticable. And though our labors, particularly in this instance, may not, at our first attempt, be so successful as we are sanguine enough to expect, yet if we publicly address our hearers, first convincing them of the duty, and then exhorting them to the practice of it, by a personal appeal, as it were, to the heart of every father, and of every head of a family

family in the congregation; if we afterwards take the opportunity, before the approach of night, of enforcing in private conversation upon all whom we see, the advantages which will individually arise from the adoption of this essential part of christian duty in their families, and then call at the houses of those whom we have not seen, leaving with each family to whom it will be acceptable, a suitable form of prayer, and beseeching them by cogent arguments, and affectionate persuasions, to use it every night before they retire to rest: if on the succeeding Sunday we appeal to them from the pulpit, and ask them in the more immediate presence of God, in what manner, if they disregard our exhortations, they shall be able to answer at his Tribunal for their neglect—we shall, assuredly, have the inexpressible comfort of knowing that “our labor will not be in vain in the Lord:” the seed so judiciously sown “will spring up, and produce “some thirty, some sixty, and some, even an “hundred fold.” “He, says our blessed Lord, “that is not with me,” contending against Satan’s kingdom, “is against me, and he that “gathereth not with me, scattereth” men abroad from it.]

There is, I am persuaded, no part of our ministerial vocation, which so eminently conduces to the edification, and “the instruction of “our people in righteousness,” as free and unserved conversation with them. Men are brought either by grievous disappointment, severe calamity, or serious reflection to determine upon a change of life. Now if there be not previously some personal intercourse with their Minister, they very

naturally conclude that he doth not feel much interested in their salvation; they therefore apply to people of other persuasions; and from that period, such men, if my observation has not been very erroneous, generally cease to be members of the Church of England. To prevail with us to use, as we promised at our Ordination, "not only public but private monitions," it need only be suggested to us, that many who smart under the lash of justice, and many who have, by the forfeiture of their lives, expiated their offences against society, have bitterly complained, and grievously lamented, that, whilst they were running their ignominious career, their Pastor never interrupted them in their hasty pursuit, never "warned them to flee from the wrath to come," never exhorted them to "acquaint themselves with God, and be at peace." Now what stronger argument can be urged to prevail with us to visit the people committed to our charge, not only at stated times, but also whenever occasion suggests, and necessity requires, as the awful reflection, that many souls go into eternity, without being shewn by him who was appointed to watch over them, the heinousness of sin, and the necessity of religion; without being conjured and importuned to practice the duties, that they may experience the consolations of the Gospel? Blessed God! with what face shall we meet those souls at thy tribunal! A favorite plant, or a curious shrub, we water with care, and watch with solicitude, protecting it from the inclemency of seasons, from the killing frost, and the scorching heat; we assist its growth, and support its strength, delighted to see it flourish.

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May the salvation of our people, in like manner, engage all our care, and employ all our solicitude! "Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. But if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, thou hast delivered thy soul."

The attention of the Clergy has often, though ineffectually, been called to the revival of a custom almost generally laid aside, except for a few Sundays at one season of the year—the catechising of the children and young people in their several parishes. To this strange, unaccountable, and, forgive me when I say, unpardonable neglect, is to be attributed the extreme ignorance of religion which so generally prevails throughout our congregations. For to prepare discourses level to such uncultivated minds, to enlighten them with wisdom, and inform them with understanding, requires the profoundest judgment, and the nicest observation. Not "having been brought up in the way they should go," they take no delight in reading the Scriptures, and acquainting themselves with the conditions on which God will accept their services, and pardon their transgressions; so that when, to elucidate our arguments, we have recourse to allusions which the sacred writings so frequently, and so strikingly present, our hearers instead of deriving instruction, have only a faint and imperfect idea of the truths we would convey, and we have the mortification

mortification of being disappointed in our endeavors, either to convince their understandings, or to persuade their affections. If to this mortification we are any longer subject, it is, I conceive, entirely our own fault: let us only instruct the younger part of our flock in the principles of religion by hearing them repeat, and by explaining to them the excellent Catechism of our Church, and they will soon be prepared to understand, and enabled to apply the discourses we publicly deliver. Permit me, my Reverend Brethren, to say, that to facilitate and accomplish so desirable an end, we should distribute among them easy catechetical expositions,* and should attach them to us with Respect, and to their duty with delight, by sometimes presenting them with small pecuniary rewards. By which means we shall excite in them a very commendable emulation: they will amply reward our labors by their regular attendance on the service of the Church, and by their receiving with understanding, when they arrive at maturer years, the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper.

[In the public discharge of our duty, serious reflection, and unaffected piety are indispensable. The morning-service is so long, and our congregations so accustomed to hear it read, that if it be either performed with irreverent haste, or re-

* "The Church Catechism broke into short questions" would be very useful, and might, at a very easy expence, be distributed among the children of the lower class of people. And it is greatly to be wished that Bishop Kenn's Exposition of the Catechism was in every Family, and read carefully over previous to the administration of the Sacrament.

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dious slowness—for both are equally injudicious, and equally reprehensible—we cannot wonder that many, when attention is not excited, and devotion inspired, by the reading of it, should so often absent themselves from its celebration. On the contrary, when the service is performed with solemnity, when the ardour of devotion is enkindled by the Minister, and communicated to the Congregation; when the same spirit of piety pervades the whole assembly, then it is, that our Churches are frequented with delight, that the reading of God's word is heard with reverent attention, the prayers offered up with pious fervour, and the thanksgivings with holy joy. Most devoutly is it to be wished that our congregations invariably exhibited such a scene; that they do not, is a just cause of reproach; and it is incumbent on Us, as it depends on Us alone, to remove it.

When we consider the learning and talents of which the Clergy are in general possessed, it excites surprise and lamentation, that in the principal part of their profession, in preaching the holy word, so very few should arrive at excellence. Many men take their seat in the Senate, with the consciousness that they shall never distinguish themselves as public speakers, who may, notwithstanding, be celebrated statesmen: many are admitted at the Bar with the same consciousness, who derive all their expectations from the Opinions they shall deliver. Now the Pulpit being the only public theatre of a Clergyman's exhibition, and the success with which he performs his duty in it being of the utmost consequence to mankind—embracing the welfare of individuals,
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the comfort of families, the salvation of the world—it might naturally be expected that he would devote a considerable part of his leisure towards the cultivation of an art, which,—unless he is promoted to high dignity in the church, or is not only enabled, but also disposed to live independently of his profession,—he is so frequently obliged to exercise.* With the knowledge peculiar to his calling, and with all the collateral branches of it, he may be thoroughly conversant, yet if he has not learnt to address his auditors in such a manner as will arrest their attention, he is, in the Apostle's language, “little better than sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” A pilot may acquire a general knowledge of the several creeks and shoals which he occasionally visits; but his skill will be exerted, and his talents employed in discovering the soundings of those harbours which constitute his business, and from which he derives his subsistence.]

In the general manner of explaining, and enforcing the word of God, some improvement, it cannot be dissembled, might be made. Often when we read and hear sermons, and reflect that the object of them is to promote a renewal of mind, and holiness of life, we cannot suppress our astonishment, that the writer should so entirely have forgotten the design of preaching, which is to convince the understanding, and influence the affections of his hearers, that they may all be made better men. “To convert

* Le pretre qui vit splendidement parmi des grandes richesses, & cependant ne preche point, ressemble a une lanterne dorée, ou il n'y point de chandelle.

See sermon 7th of Du Moulin—La premiere Decade.

“ sinners from the error of their ways;” to persuade them “ to fear God and to work righteousness,” is an effect not likely to be produced, and in fact never was produced, by cold and uninteresting discourses on the beauty of virtue, and the moral fitness of things. A Christian auditory expects, and demands exhortations fraught with Christian principles, and enforced with Christian arguments. If what we deliver is not “ the law of the Lord converting the soul” — however original may be the thought, lucid the arrangement, and eloquent the expression — however happy we may be in all the insinuation of address, and the graces of elocution — our hearers will return from the house of God disappointed in their expectations, because unedified in their minds.* To such preachers may be applied the language of St. Paul — “ thou verily givest thanks well, but the hearer is not edified.”

The subjects which are generally insisted on in the Church, are not, if we are to judge from the effects, sufficiently interesting. Our congregations would, I apprehend, soon become more numerous and attentive, and our parishes of course more decent and exemplary, if we oftener expatiated on the grand doctrines of Redemption from everlasting misery — of remission of sins, and

* On the subject of preaching, see a very judicious, and very excellent Tract, entitled, *Brief Reflections on the Eloquence of the Pulpit* — by the Rev. Dr. Gardiner, the eloquent Preacher at the Octagon Chapel, Bath. Sold by Rivingtons, Price only one shilling and six pence. Also the *Principles of Eloquence* by the Abbé Maury, translated by Mr. Lake. — Sold by Cadell and Dilly.

sanctification of heart. Our discourses, as well as our manner of delivering them would; it might be presumed, be more awakening; and in the place of that lukewarmness by which many of the most orderly of our people are characterized, would be substituted the love of God, the fear of evil, and the desire of a blessed resurrection, and a joyful immortality. The necessity of such a change in the mode of preaching, is recommended in almost every Charge addressed to the Clergy; the propriety of it is shewn in every conversation we hear upon the subject; the obligation of adopting it is enforced upon us by the insensibility and ignorance of some of our parishoners, and by the impiety and profligacy of others. Our preaching, to be efficacious, must be, "in demonstration of the spirit and of power." The characteristic of the Gospel is, that "it is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;" but if it has failed to awaken the thoughtless, to alarm the impenitent, to reclaim the vicious, will it not be surmised, that we have been wanting either in judgment, or industry, in the application of it? A sagacious husbandman, who has been disappointed of a crop, considers whether his land was properly tilled, and whether the grain he sowed was congenial to the soil: if he have been mistaken, he spares no pains to meliorate the ground; he exercises all his knowledge in selecting the seed for a future harvest.

The morning of the Lord's Day is usually appropriated to the office of preaching; but it is to be lamented that no public instruction is, throughout a great part of the kingdom—not even in
some

some considerable towns—given from the pulpit in the afternoon. The consequence is, that our Churches, during that part of the day, are very generally neglected. The afternoon is spent in indolence, often in debauchery, and the small impression which was made by the sermon in the morning, is often wholly effaced by the pursuits of the evening. Where no afternoon sermon was instituted, it was presumed, that the Minister would catechize the younger part of the auditory, and explain some portion of the Catechism. God grant that every Clergyman may individually be disposed to deliver during evening service, either catechetical Lectures, or explain the Epistle and Gospel, or the Psalms, or Lessons! or what would perhaps be productive of the greatest good, to harmonize and illustrate the four Evangelists! We should by so doing, it is true, impose on ourselves a certain degree of study and application; but should we not be thereby improving ourselves in the science of salvation? And when every one of us “shall receive his own reward according to his own labor”—do we think that we shall then have cause to lament, that we have devoted our time, and applied our talents, towards building up the people committed to our charge in our most holy faith, and making them, as is our bounden duty, “wise unto salvation?” Besides, my Reverend Brethren, is it thought by those who dissent from us that we discharge our duty, when we know, and cannot but know, that if we adopted some such plan as that which I have presumed to suggest, we should provide instruction for ignorance, and induce very many of our people to attend the Church,

Church, instead of loitering at home, or wandering in the fields, or mispending their time, and misapplying their money, in all the excesses of intemperance? It is from the want of some instruction in the afternoon of the Lord's Day, that so many of our flock are led to attach themselves to other Communion. Shall we not stand much higher in the estimation of society—shall we not be considered more generally useful, by “preaching in season, and out of season”—not only as the Canons of the Church prescribe, or the customs of the country authorize, but as necessity demands, and conscience enforces? Then will it be evident to all men that “we do it for the Gospel's sake; and that we are indeed laborers together with God.”

I am ashamed, to have so long exercised your patience. But as I have before acknowledged myself to be, from the signs of the times, exceedingly alarmed for the preservation of the Church, and the interests of the Gospel; under such impression I have addressed you with fraternal freedom, and have suggested what appears to me as essential to be generally adopted by the Clergy throughout the whole kingdom, in order to preserve the very existence of the Church; in which I comprehend the happiness of society, and the blessings of salvation.

Permit me, in conclusion, to repeat to you, and to inscribe in indelible characters upon your hearts, that we are all called upon by the nation at large to exert ourselves in our profession with peculiar diligence; to signalize our attachment to the Church, and our concern for Religion, by laboring more abundantly, than we have hitherto done,

done, in the work of the Lord. Permit me to repeat to you, that we are exhorted by every tongue, and conjured by every pen, "to lay aside every weight," every engagement, which, however lawful it may be in itself, is now considered as by no means expedient, if in appearance only, it interfere in the smallest degree with the discharge of our ecclesiastical function. — Many wise and good men have expressed the most alarming apprehensions, that if we do not "take especial heed to the ministry we have received in the Lord to fulfil it," there will be a speedy overthrow, first of the Church, and then a general wreck of the Constitution. Should that day come upon us, "all hands will then be faint, and every man's heart will melt, and we shall all be afraid: pangs and sorrows will take hold of us; we shall be amazed one at another." What should we think of the prudence of a man, who, occupying an house which he was told by all his neighbors must, from their observation of the out-walls giving way, unavoidably fall, should, either through indolence, or obstinacy continue in it, disregarding their information, and despising their warnings, and should at last, either be buried in the ruins, or with difficulty escape? "I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say," and determine for yourselves. Auspicious would it be to the welfare of society, and the interests of Religion, if every patron would consider himself as holding patronage in trust, not for the perverted purpose of conferring a favour, or of acknowledging an obligation; but from the exalted principle of promoting the moral edification, and everlasting happiness

happiness of mankind. Happy for this Church and Nation, if every Clergyman would consider himself as appointed to the care of a parish, solely that he may carry into effect the original design of the institution of a Christian Ministry, which is, to "convert sinners from the error of their ways, and to turn many to righteousness;" to the end that his flock may all "be followers of the Lord," and also become "ensamples to all around them!" Happy, inexpressibly happy for himself, if through his ministry, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, gives unto them the spirit of wisdom; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, so that their faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of them all towards each other aboundeth!" Is this, my Reverend Brethren, the state of our parishes? If it be, let us "continue to do the work of the Lord diligently," evincing by our labors, that we were, as we declared ourselves, to be, "moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon ourselves such office and administration." But if all be otherwise—if our people have, through

Que fais-je (says the inimitable Flechier) des talens que Dieu m'a donnez? Tout serviteur oisif sera traité, comme coupable; les Pharisiens couraient la terre, & les mers pour aller faire un Profelyte, la charité ne peut-elle faire en moi ce que la vanité faisoit en eux? c'est une étoile qui les guide a la vigne du Seigneur pour y travailler; cependant on demeure oisif, & l'on ne semble tenir a l'église que par l'honneur qu'on en recoit, ou par le bien qu'on en retire, &c.

The last thought is eloquently expanded in the first Sermon of Dr. White's Bampton Lectures. See Vol. 1st Pour le jour des Rois.

our ministry, "received the grace of God in
 "vain;" if we have been such negligent and
 slothful Pastors, as to suffer them to entangle
 themselves in the wiles of sin, without using our
 every effort to extricate them from the danger,
 and preserve them from the punishment of it,
 assuredly it will be said to us, "why didst thou
 "preach my laws, and take my covenant in thy
 "mouth?"

God of his mercy grant that every Minister
 of the Gospel may, in that great day of the Lord,
 be able to present all the souls entrusted to his
 care, to the Almighty Judge in these words of
 consolation—"Behold the flock of which I was
 "overseer, and of all those at any time com-
 "mitted to my charge, not one is lost!"

Holy Spirit! Thou who inspiredst the first
 Preachers of the Gospel, with wisdom, and ena-
 bledst them by their reasonings to convince, and
 by their exhortations to persuade, accompany,
 if it be thy gracious will, the discourse which
 I have now delivered, with power, and with
 efficacy, that instead of becoming a subject of
 scandal, it may be received "as a savor of life
 "unto life," by every Minister to whom it hath
 been addressed. And grant, that it may impress
 on the minds of our several hearers, now assem-
 bled in this holy Temple, the conviction, that
 we are all anxiously interested in their welfare,
 and that "we watch for their souls, as they that
 "must give account!" AMEN.

FINIS.

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